

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 SS-15 SP-02 INR-07 NSC-05
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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4865
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

S E C R E T SANTIAGO 4102

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, IT, CI, US
SUBJECT: RAFAEL GONZALEZ VERDUGO

REF: ROME 7968

1. ITALIAN CHARGE D'AFFAIRES DE VERGOTTINI CALLED ON DCM AND EMBOFF MAY 17 TO FILL US IN ON GOI MOVES DESCRIBED REFTEL. HE SAID THAT ROME WAS TRYING TO BUILD PRESSURE ON THE CHILEANS. THEY HAD NOT GOTTEN MUCH HELP FROM THE PAPAL NUNCIO HERE, AND CARDINAL SILVA HAD INTERVENED WITH THE GOC BUT WITHOUT RESULT. (ANOTHER SOURCE TELLS US THAT DE VERGOTTINI ASKED THE LOCAL ICRC REPRESENTATIVE TO MEET WITH GONZALEZ, AND THE ITALIANS ARE ALSO TRYING TO GET THE SPANISH INTO THE ACT.) WE NOTED THAT THE ONLY SOLUTION IS GETTING GONZALEZ OUT OF THE COUNTRY; MOVING HIM AROUND IN CHILE WOULD NOT SOVLE ANYTHING (DE VERGOTTINI NODDED HIS UNDERSTANDING).

2. AS AN EXAMPLE OF WHY WE WERE CONVINCED THE GOC WOULD NOT LET GONZALEZ OUT OF CHILE, WE GAVE DE VERGOTTINI A COPY OF THE MAY 3 JACK ANDERSON COLUMN, WHICH CHARGED THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DIRECTORATE (DINA) WITH THE MURDER OF ORLANDO LETELIER. ACCORDING TO ANDERSON, "A DINA DEFECTOR NOW IN ASYLUM IN THE ITALIAN EMBASSY IN SANTIAGO" VERIFIED THE AUTHENTICITY OF A MEMORANDUM IN WHICH DINA ASKED PRESIDENT PINOCHET FOR
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\$600,000 TO NEUTRALIZE OPPONENTS OF THE REGIME LIVING ABROAD.

3. DE VERGOTTININ EXPRESSED SURPRISE. HE SAID HE HAD NEVER EVEN HEARD OF THE ALLEGED MEMORANDUM BUT WAS SURE THAT GONZALEZ HAD NOT MET WITH THE PRESS FOR MONTHS. HE ALLOWED THAT RELATIVES COULD HAVE SERVED AS A CONDUIT BUT DISPLAYED AMAZEMENT THAT GONZALEZ WOULD HAVE PREJUDICED HIS POSITION BY INVOLVING HIMSELF

IN A TANGENTIAL ASPECT OF THE GOC'S MOST EXPOSED NERVE. COMMENT:
WHY SUCH ACTIVITY BY GONZALEZ WOULD "AMAZE" DE VERGOTTINI IS
NOT CLEAR SINCE GONZALEZ' EARLIER INTERVIEWS GAVE US PRESS
A GREAT DEAL OF COPY RE CHILE INTELLIGENCE AND OTHER EMBARRASSING
MATERIAL. END COMMENT. WE POINTED OUT THAT WHETHER FACTUALLY
ACCURATE OR NOT (DE VERGOTTINI LATER CALLED TO SAY GONZALEZ
DENIED PRESS ACCOUNT) THE GOC WOULD SURELY HAVE NOTED ANDERSON'S
REFERENCE TO GONZALEZ, WHICH EPITOMIZED THE KIND F THING
THEY EXPECT HIM TO SAY IF HE EVER GETS OUT OF CHILE. DE VERGOTTINI
DEJECTEDLY AGREED.

4. COMMENT: THE ITALIANS ARE UNDERSTANDABLY EAGER TO GET RID
OF WHAT DE VERGOTTINI CALLS HIS "HOT POTATO," AND CLEARLY DE
VERGOTTINI AND HIS COLLEAGUES IN ROME HOPE THE DEMARCHE TO
HARTMAN WILL PROMPT ANOTHER INTENSIVE USG EFFORT TO OBTAIN THE
SAFE-CONDUCT THAT WOULD MAKE GONZALEZ' DEPARTURE FROM CHILE POSSIBLE.
DCM TOLD DE VERGOTTINI WE HAD NO INSTRUCTIONS AND WOULD RECOMMEND
AGAINST A FURTHER EFFORT BY THIS EMBASSY FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS.

5. IN FACT, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THIS WOULD BE THE MOMENT FOR US
TO UNDERTAKE THE "DECISIVE INTERVENTION" THE GOI WOULD LIKE
TO SEE. GONZALEZ IS NOT, AS THE ANDERSON STORY ASSERTED, A DINA
DEFECTOR. HE CLAIMS TO BE ALBE TO BLOW THE WHISTLE ON AIR FORCE
INTELLIGENCE. BUT THE ANDERSON STORY CAN ONLY REINFORCE WHAT
APPEARS TO BE JUNTA MEMBER AND AIR FORCE CINC GENERAL LEIGH'S
ALREADY FIRM ASSESSMENT THAT GONZALEZ OUT OF CHILE WOULD BE MORE
TROULBE THAN A GONZALEZ IN THE ITALIAN EMBASSY IN SANTIAGO.

6. IN SHORT, WE WILL NOT, IN OUR JUDGMENT, BE SUCCESSFUL
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WITH YET ANOTHER GONZALEZ DEMARCHE AT WHATEVER LEVEL. FORCING
THE ISSUE MIGHT PREJUDICE THE USE OF US INFLUENCE ON THE BROADER
QUESTION OF GOC REPRESSION. AS WILL BE REPORTED IN A SEPTTEL,
WE NOW BELIEVE THAT DURING THE PAST FEW WEEKS DINA HAS REVERTED
TO SOME OF ITS CRUDER PRACTICES.
POPPER

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